



Cooperative Research Partners Initiative



Study Fleet Project Newsletter

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What is the Study Fleet Project?

The Study Fleet Project is a pilot project that partners commercial fishermen with NOAA Fisheries personnel to develop and implement state-of-the-art electronic data reporting devices and software for use aboard groundfish fishing vessels in the Northeast. Fishermen are assisting in the design of these data collection systems. These collaborative efforts will result in information that will be utilized by both fishermen and managers.

NOAA Fisheries has contracted Perot Systems Government Services (PSGS) to manage many aspects of the Study Fleet Project. PSGS has hired two staff members to work in the field with Study Fleet participants. Earl Meredith, the director of CRPI, feels that the extensive use of field staff is essential to the Study Fleet Project. "The CRPI Study Fleet Project is unique because of the level of interaction between our field staff and the captains and crews on the participating vessels. Early in the project, the field staff took trips to determine which devices might work given individual vessels' fishing practices. Now, they are taking trips with the fishermen to show them how the devices work, watch the captains collecting data using the devices, and discuss ways to improve the devices. This level of interaction is one of the things that really sets this project apart from others with similar objectives."

The Study Fleet Project will be assessing the utility of the various electronic reporting devices on vessels with a variety of wheelhouse characteristics through the use of three separate New England fleets: Gulf of Maine mid-sized vessels; Southern New England large, offshore vessels; and smaller Cape Cod hook vessels. The Gulf of Maine Research Institute, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, and the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association have been sub-contracted by PSGS to assist with the coordination of the fleets.

Many of the participating vessels have been outfitted with electronic data collection devices and are currently collecting catch and effort information using these devices. The vessels that are not yet outfitted with devices are slated to receive devices over the next few months. Currently, participants are collecting data using Thistle Marine's HMS-110 Electronic Logbook for Multi-Species Fisheries and an electronic logbook system developed by a programmer working with the University of New Hampshire. Changes to these systems based upon participant feedback are being considered and, in many cases, are under development. Also, additional systems are under development and will be implemented in the near future. ✱

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Top photo: One of the participating vessels in the Study Fleet Project, the F/V Julie D, hailing from Harpswell, ME. Bottom photo: Captain Bill Lee of F/V Ocean Reporter enters data using a Thistle Marine HMS-110 Electronic Logbook. The Thistle device is one of many that will be tested in the Study Fleet Project.

Technology Corner

Fishing and Navigation. These two components are the most important part of a fisherman's job. The Study Fleet Project is examining systems which combine these two components into one electronic logbook, allowing



Thistle Box HMS-110

fishermen to view catch and effort information in relation to nautical charts. Many different systems will be tested during the Study Fleet Project.

Currently, participants in the Study Fleet are testing two electronic data collection systems. The first, the Thistle Marine HMS-110, includes both hardware and software components. The device is self-contained, weatherproof, can be operated with a gloved hand, and is connected to the vessel's Global Positioning System (GPS). After a fishing trip, the fisherman brings the unit home, connects it to a phone line,

and sends and saves the data on Thistle Marine's secure web site.

The second system that is currently being tested is the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Logbook. This system allows fishermen to enter catch and effort data into an easy to use logbook (please see story below for additional details). The UNH logbook has been installed on Dell Inspiron laptops and distributed to a small number of participants. Development efforts have also begun on a third electronic logbook.

Additionally, two tablet PCs have been purchased for use in this project and others are being considered for purchase. *

UNH Logbook Enhancements Underway

The Study Fleet Project is excited to announce that Scott Tibbetts, designer of the UNH Logbook software, has been signed on as a subcontractor to address some of the changes and improvements participants have suggested for the UNH Logbook.

The UNH Logbook has proven over the past three months that it is a viable option for tow-by-tow data collection. Among the features particularly appealing to fishermen is the ability to view data in a report format that is similar to the NMFS Vessel Trip

Reports. Fishermen have also suggested possible changes to the logbook that would make it more

"INPUT FROM FISHERMEN WAS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE DESIGN OF THIS LOGBOOK, AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE AS WE MAKE CHANGES."

user-friendly and less time-consuming, such as interfacing the GPS and UNH logbook to allow automatic recording of location. These suggestions are

being considered as the next version of this software is developed.

"Input from fishermen was the driving force behind the design of this logbook, and it will continue to be as we make changes," said Scott. *



Story Reed, member of PSGS Field Staff, works with Tony Santos, F/V T. Luis, on a UNH Logbook.

Study Fleet Participants

There are currently fifteen vessels from three fleets participating in the CRPI Study Fleet Project. The vessels in each fleet are managed by one of three coordinating groups. The following is a list of each participant in the Study Fleet, arranged by coordinating group:

Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences

Zane Gogola - F/V Mora K

Bob Khole – F/V Glenna and Jacob
Phil Ruhle Jr. – F/V Sea Breeze
Tony Santos – F/V T. Luis
Scott Wescott – F/V Mary Elena

Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Assoc.

Jamie Eldredge – F/V Yellow Bird
Bruce Kaminski – F/V Never Enough
Tom Luce – F/V Sea Win
Mike Russo – F/V Susan Lee

Peter Taylor – F/V Sea Hound

Gulf of Maine Research Inst.

Lendall Alexander – F/V Julie D.
David Goethel – F/V Ellen Diane
Bill Lee – F/V Ocean Reporter
Cameron McLellan – F/V Adventurer
Paul Vitale – F/V Angela & Rose

*

Participant Profile

Paul Vitale is one of the participants in the Study Fleet Project and captains the F/V Angela & Rose, shown below. Story Reed, member of the field staff for the Study Fleet Project recently posed the following questions to Paul.



How long have you been fishing the Angela & Rose?

My father and I have been fishing the Angela & Rose since the Summer of 1997.

Why do you think it is important to be involved with cooperative research projects, particularly the Study Fleet?

I wanted to be a part of the Study Fleet project so I could be involved in the design of an electronic logbook that is simple for fishermen to use and also as beneficial as possible. There are many different skill levels out there in the fleet regarding computers and

that needs to be recognized. By being involved with the design and testing of these systems I can have input as to what the final system is. Fishermen need to be involved in the process of designing electronic reporting devices.*

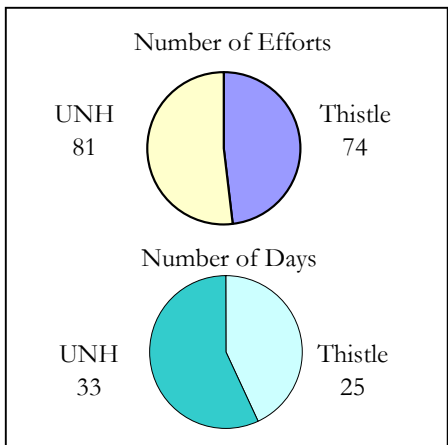
"I WANTED TO BE A PART OF THE STUDY FLEET PROJECT SO I COULD BE INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN OF AN ELECTRONIC LOGBOOK THAT IS SIMPLE FOR FISHERMEN TO USE AND ALSO AS BENEFICIAL AS POSSIBLE."

Data Collections Progress

Study Fleet participants have been using devices supplied by the project to collect data since August. The first data collections made by a participant equipped with a Thistle box began in August. Since that time, two additional boxes were installed for a total of three Study Fleet supplied Thistle Boxes in use. In September, Study Fleet participants began collecting data using the UNH Logbook. Currently, the UNH Logbook devices have been deployed and are being used to capture data by

Study Fleet participants. There is also one additional Thistle Box and one UNH Logbook that were supplied by previous projects that are being used by Study Fleet participants.

During the month of October, participants collected data using the electronic devices on a total of 58 days. On these 58 days, 165 efforts (tows, hauls, etc.) were conducted. Three vessels collected data on 74 efforts spanning 25 days using the Thistle Box. Three vessels collected data on 81 efforts spanning 33 days using the UNH logbook.*



The number of efforts (tows, hauls, etc.) and days upon which the UNH logbook and Thistle Box were used to collect data.

What's Next?

Plans are being made to hold a Study Fleet Workshop early in 2004. Participants in the project will be able to meet with other participants and CRPI staff to discuss their ideas and experiences. Additionally, conference attendees will have the opportunity to view some of the new systems that will be tested in the next few months. More information will be available about this conference as

plans move forward.

In the technology arena, CRPI will be outfitting all vessels in the fleet with devices as soon as possible. Two ruggedized tablet PC's have been purchased and will be outfitted with software shortly. Additionally, CRPI and P-Sea Software Company have been working together to develop software that is capable of collecting

catch and effort information and coupling it with navigation software.*



The Walkabout Hammerhead, an example of a tablet PC.

About Cooperative Research Partners Initiative

The goals of the Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI) are to build working relationships among the partners and enhance the information used by fishery managers. The CRPI is managed by NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office. Research priorities are set in collaboration with the New England Fishery Management Council. Funding awards are competitive, and proposals are reviewed by a panel consisting of Council Research Steering Committee members and outside experts.

A dual approach to cooperative research is the core of the initiative. First, three long-term cooperative research programs focusing on improving fishery-independent and fishery-dependent data are currently being implemented. Second, multiple short-term research projects are being

funded annually through contracts and grants.

**For additional NOAA Fisheries
CRPI information, please contact:**

Earl Meredith, Ph.D.
CRPI Coordinator
(978) 281-9276
earl.meredith@noaa.gov

John Hoey, Ph.D.
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Cooperative Research Coordinator
(401) 782-3323 (Mon., Tues. & Fri.)
(508) 495-2059 (Weds. & Thurs.)
john.hoey@noaa.gov

Sarah Pike
CRPI Research Associate
(978) 281-9146
sarah.pike@noaa.gov

For additional Study Fleet field

information, please contact:

David McCarron
PSGS Study Fleet Project Manager
(207) 967-0098
david.mccarron@ps.net

Ted Racine
PSGS Field Staff for S. New England
(401) 595-7035
ted.racine@noaa.gov

Story Reed
PSGS Field Staff for N. New England
(978) 281-9395
story.reed@noaa.gov

**For additional Study Fleet program
information, please contact:**

Carl Leoncello
PSGS Program Manager
(978) 281-9392
carl.leoncello@noaa.gov

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Cooperative Research Partners Initiative
NOAA Fisheries
1 Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

WE'RE ON THE WEB:

[HTTP://COOPRESEARCH.NERO.NOAA.GOV](http://coopresearch.nero.noaa.gov)
